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THE GAELIC "BALLAD OF THE MANTLE"

A well-known group of mediaeval narratives deals with a chastity-testing mantle which is brought to King Arthur's court and which causes shame to Guenevere and other ladies by whom it is donned. Only one of the women undergoes the probation successfully, thus proving herself virtuous.

Some thirty years ago Otto Warnatsch, after an examination of the available material, was convinced that, although the power of detecting human frailties is attributed to various inanimate objects in the folklore of many peoples, the peculiar form of the test occurring in the mantle poems originated in Celtic territory,¹ and more recent authorities have apparently favored the same view.² With regard, however, to the plot of which the mantle is the center, Warnatsch says, "Ihre literarische Gestaltung erlangte [die Mantelprobe] . . . erst in der altfranzösischen Poesie."³ That the mantle test found a literary setting which, although superficially similar to that in Arthurian romance, is independent of and perhaps antecedent to the Continental versions, is the hypothesis proposed in the present discussion.

It is clear at the outset that in a properly constructed narrative of the type outlined above the motive actuating the gift of the magic robe to Arthur should not only be adequately explained or implied but also be such as to comport with the character of the giver; otherwise the result of the trial loses in effectiveness, and the whole story becomes more or less frivolous and trivial. As will appear from the following discussion, the motive ascribed to the giver goes far toward establishing the relative primitiveness of the version in question.

¹ *Der Mantel* (Breslau, 1883), p. 58. The suggestion had already been made by Ferdinand Wolf, *Über die Lais*, etc. (Heidelberg, 1841), p. 176, and by F. A. Wulff, *Versions nordiques du fabliau français Le mantel mautailié* (ed., G. Cederschiöld and F. A. W., Lund, 1877), p. 100. Warnatsch also favored the theory of Celtic origin for the magic horn, which in a group of related documents is used by the men to test the virtue of their wives.

² Cf. Gaston Paris, *Romania*, XXVIII, 219, n. 3. See further F. A. Wulff, *Romania*, XIV (1885), 345; Miss L. A. Paton, *Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (Boston, 1903), pp. 111 ff.

³ Warnatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

One of the oldest written accounts of the mantle test dates from the early thirteenth century and is contained in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*,¹ the French original of which was carried to Germany in 1194. Here the magic garment is an otherworld object sent to Arthur's court by a *wise merminne* (vs. 5767; cf. vs. 193), the guardian of Lancelot. The purpose of the gift is to bring honor to Lancelot's wife, Iblis, who alone undergoes the test successfully after many other ladies, including Ginovere,² have made the trial to their shame.³ The *merminne* is to be identified with the Dame du Lac, whose attitude toward Lancelot is generally that of an excessively indulgent fairy godmother. That this conception is totally at variance with her true character has been abundantly demonstrated by Miss Paton.⁴ Originally the *fée's* benevolence is prompted by purely selfish motives. She humors the hero only that she herself may enjoy his love, and a fundamental law of her essentially jealous nature precludes the possibility of her favoring a mortal rival. Confusion of types, refinement of sentiment, or ignorance of tradition may cause her affection to be regarded as Platonic or disinterested, but the story of her relations with her mortal favorite begins with a scandal about a resourceful and amorous water-woman who never shares her lover with an earth-born maiden.⁵ It is therefore certain that the motive actuating the gift in Ulrich's poem is a relatively late and sophisticated invention.

The version of the mantle test usually regarded as most primitive is that found in the Old French *Conte du mantel*, which dates probably from the latter part of the twelfth century,⁶ and which in a thirteenth-century manuscript is designated as a *lai de Bretagne*.⁷ Here the mantle is of fairy workmanship, it is brought by a *vallet* from *une*

¹ *Lanzelet* (ed. K. A. Hahn, Frankfurt a/M., 1845), pp. 134 ff.

² The failure of the queen is surprising, since she has only *an den gedenken missevarn*. As Child remarks, "Ulrich is very feeble here" (*Ballads*, I, 260, note).

³ In a German poem, dating probably from the early thirteenth century and preserved in fragmentary form, the gift of a virtue-testing mantle to Arthur seems also to have had for its purpose the exaltation of Lancelot's wife. See Warnatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff., 107 f. In the Norse *Samsons saga Fagra*, which may be connected with the version represented by the *Lanzelet* (*Romania*, XIV, 353, n. 2), the mantle is manufactured by four *fées*, but its subsequent history is of no interest for our purpose. See Cederschiöld and Wulff, *Versions nordiques du fabliau français Le mantel mautailié*, pp. 90 f.

⁴ Miss Paton, *op. cit.*, pp. 192 ff.

⁵ See *infra*, p. 657.

⁶ Cf. F. A. Wulff, *Versions nordiques*, p. 99; *Romania*, XIV, 355.

⁷ *Romania*, VIII (1879), 31; XIV (1885), 345. Gaston Paris believed that the *Conte* is the source of Ulrich's lost original (*Romania*, X, 477).

pucele . . . de mout lointain país, and its use results in shaming Guenevere and other ladies and in magnifying the virtue of the *amie* of Carados Briebraz,¹ but the gift lacks even the reason implied in the *Lanzelet*. The poet was obviously content to utilize the mantle as a means of publishing the queen's faithlessness and of glorifying Carados through the stainless character of that hero's mistress,² without troubling himself even to suggest the motive of the sender.³

Other versions of the mantle test which are important for our purpose may be introduced in connection with a prose rendering of the *Conte* found in a sixteenth-century manuscript and noteworthy because of the name of the sender. In this late *Manteau mal taillé* the mantle is sent to Arthur's court by Morgain la fée. Her motive is envy of Guenevere's beauty and jealousy of the queen's love for Lancelot—"qui fut cause la faire conspirer sur la reine et toutes ses dames, telle chose dont la feste fut despartye, et par aventure si la reine l'eust fait semondre à celle feste, l'inconvenient jamais ne fust advenu."⁴

Although anger at exclusion from a feast is also attributed to Arthur's sister⁵ as a reason for sending the troublesome gift in a version of the horn story found in a fifteenth-century *Fastnachtspiel*, "the motive of the slighted fay," as Miss Paton has shown,⁶ "is not indigenous to the Morgain saga, and . . . is to be regarded as the importation of an ordinary folk-lore theme into late material."

¹ Though Loth (*Les Mabinogion*, 2d ed., I [1913], 285, n. 1; 360, n. 1) regards the epithet *Briebraz* as Welsh in source, generally speaking the evidence for the Welsh origin of the story of the mantle is uncertain in date and suspicious in character. See Child, *Ballads*, I, 265 f.; Stern, *Ztsch. für celt. Phil.*, I (1896-97), 304 ff.

² In the *Lai du corn* the successful lady is the wife of Garadue (Caradoc) as she is of Craddocke in the English ballad of "The Boy and the Mantle" (Child, *Ballads*, No. 29). Cf. *Versions nordiques*, p. 88, n. 36.

³ The same is true of the early thirteenth-century Norse translation of a lost French version of the *Conte* preserved in the *Möttuls saga*, and of the fifteenth-century *Skikkju Rímur*, which latter goes back to the *Conte* plus some independent source. In both the *saga* and the *rímur* the mantle is an otherworld object. In the former the garment is brought to Arthur by a *sveinn* from a *fríðasta maer . . . fjarri yðru landi*, the hero is Karadin, and the heroine is unnamed (*Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd samt Möttuls saga* [ed., G. Brynjulfson], Kjöbenhavn, 1878, pp. 223 ff.; *Versions nordiques*, pp. 8 ff.). In the *Skikkju Rímur* the mantle is brought by a man from a courteous lady of great power (*hennar líki er valla nú*). The test results in the exoneration of Kardon, the mistress of Kaligras (*Versions nordiques*, pp. 58 ff.). On the forms of the names, see *Versions nordiques*, pp. 85, n. 19; 88, n. 36. See further Child, *Ballads*, I, 260 f. In the English ballad Gueneuer and other ladies fail to meet the test, and Craddocke's wife wins after she confesses having kissed her husband once before marriage, but nothing is said of the sender and the only suggestion of a motive is found in the boy's request that Arthur give the mantle to his "comely queene."

⁴ Legrand d'Aussy, *Fabliaux ou Contes* (Paris, 1829), I, 126 ff.

⁵ Called *künigin von Zipper*. Cf. Warnatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 67; Miss Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁶ Miss Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Morgain's jealousy of the love between Lancelot and Guenevere should also be looked upon as an element introduced into the story at a comparatively recent period, after the famous liaison had become an established fact in romance.¹ Equally untrustworthy is the motivation in a fifteenth-century *Meistergesang*, which represents Arthur's *swesterkint*, Laneth, as receiving from a friendly dwarf a mantle with which she revenges herself on Guenevere for casting her off and aspersing her character.² After examining a large number of romances in which Morgain's hatred of Arthur and his wife is ascribed to various causes,³ Miss Paton, guided by the doubtful evidence of an episode treating of Morgain and a dangerous mantle in the Huth *Merlin* and in *Malory*, was led to suspect that the gift to Arthur of such a garment was attributed to Morgain before the sixteenth century, but the data at her disposal were too scanty to create more than a slight probability pointing in that direction.⁴

With these preliminary observations it is appropriate to examine a group of documents involving the mantle test but falling outside the field of Arthurian romance.

The Gaelic "Ballad of the Mantle" has been popular in Scotland for more than three centuries. The oldest copy, preserved in the early sixteenth-century Scottish Gaelic *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, was written down probably about the year 1500.⁵ A second version, in Irish, occurs in the seventeenth-century *Duanaire Finn*.⁶ A similar Irish poem, recorded in the eighteenth century, exists in the Edinburgh MS 54.⁷ Other late redactions have been discovered in

¹ Cf. Miss Paton, *loc. cit.* Morgain's desire to reveal Guenevere's guilty love is also the motive in certain versions of the horn story. See below, n. 4.

² Child, *Ballads*, I, 261. Cf. Miss Paton, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 ff. In *Der Luneten Mantel* a fifteenth-century *Fastnachtspiel*, Luneta uses the mantle to stir up trouble at Arthur's court, but no excuse is assigned for her action. See *Bibl. des litt. Vereins in Stuttgart*, XXIX (1853), pp. 664 ff.

³ In the *Lai du corn* (ca. 1150) and its congeners, which are closely related to the mantle group and which, with it, doubtless go back ultimately to an earlier popular account of a chastity test, Guenevere and Caradoc stand out, but the motive of the gift is omitted or is as flimsy as those indicated above. Cf. Child, *Ballads*, I, 262, note.

⁴ Morgain is the sender of the virtue-testing drinking vessel in the prose *Tristan* (Löseth, § 47), in *Malory* (Book VIII, chap. xxxiv), and in the *Orlando Furioso* (XLIII, 28 ff.). See Miss Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 105; Warnatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 134, n. 1.

⁵ Cf. Stern, *Ztsch. für celt. Phil.* I, 294 ff., which see for the text here used. For other editions, see *Mod. Phil.*, I (1903), 145, notes.

⁶ Ed., Stern, *op. cit.*, I, 301 f.

⁷ Ed., A. Macbain and J. Kennedy, *Reliquiae Celticae* (Inverness, 1892), I, pp. 116 ff. Cf. Mackinnon, *Descr. Cat. of Gaelic Manuscripts* (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 163.

seven manuscripts in the library of the Royal Irish Academy¹ and in two manuscripts in the library of Harvard University.²

The Gaelic version of the mantle test is connected with the so-called "Fenian," more properly the Ossianic, cycle—a body of epic tradition now recognized as having had its beginnings in Ireland prior to the Scandinavian invasion (795).³ The main thread of the narrative, which tends to grow long-winded in certain late manuscripts,⁴ runs as follows:

Finn mac Cumhail and several of the *Fian*, with their respective wives, are carousing in the stronghold of Almhain. The women get tipsy and begin to boast of their virtue. While they are thus engaged there enters a beautiful girl wearing a mantle. On being questioned by Finn regarding the garment she replies that it has the power of revealing the unfaithfulness of women. In turn the wives put it on, but all except one find that it does not fit, and are severely dealt with by their enraged lords. Finn, on perceiving that the mantle, when donned by his own wife, Maighinis, rises above her ears and will not come down, slays her. Mac Reithe's wife, whose person the garment does not quite cover, confesses having given one kiss to Diarmuid (the Adonis of the *Fian*) and thus escapes punishment.⁵ Finally the visitor, after announcing her name and asserting that she has never been guilty of incontinence except with Finn himself, takes her mantle and departs, accompanied by Finn's curse for the trouble she has brought.

Notwithstanding the absence of early manuscript evidence for the Gaelic "Ballad of the Mantle" and its general structural similarity to the non-Celtic versions,⁶ it cannot be regarded as a simple revamping of Arthurian tradition by the substitution of Ossianic

¹ Cf. *Mod. Phil.*, X (1913), 291, n. 1. There seems to be another copy in MS *Egerton 175* (B.M.). Cf. *Mod. Phil.*, I, 146, n. 4. J. F. Campbell appears to have known the story in Irish. See his *Leabhar na Feinne*, (London, 1872), p. 138.

² *Mod. Phil.*, I, 152, and note.

³ Zimmer's once famous views regarding the Scandinavian influences on the Ossianic cycle are now largely discredited. See *Mod. Phil.*, XVI (1918), 442.

⁴ Cf. *Mod. Phil.*, I, 150.

⁵ In the Harvard and Edinburgh MSS and in the *Duanaire Finn*, Ossin's wife also tries on the mantle, but her complete exoneration, as recorded in the Harvard copies, is probably late. See Robinson, *Mod. Phil.*, I, 151 f.

⁶ A noteworthy instance of parallelism in detail occurs in the English ballad. Sir Craddocke's wife, like Mac Reithe's, finds that the mantle fits smoothly except for her toes. Upon her confessing a small fault, the garment covers her figure completely. Cf. Robinson, *Mod. Phil.*, I, 146.

names.¹ As Mac Neill has pointed out,² the *argumentum ex silentio* is especially liable to be fallacious in matters dealing with Ossianic tradition of the earliest period. Opposed to the theory of mere borrowing are, moreover, the popularity of the ballad in British Gaeldom (a territory in which native epics were ever preferred before the romances of the Round Table),³ the highly barbaric nature of the action,⁴ and the nicety with which the plot is fitted into the complicated framework of the Ossianic cycle.

One of the most striking evidences of this careful fitting is to be observed in the character of the owner of the mantle and the reason for her behavior. Fortunately there is abundant evidence that those who heard the Gaelic ballad in its earliest preserved form perfectly understood the cause of the visitor's malignity and that in their eyes her action was justified by the best traditions of epic procedure. The words in which she reveals her identity in the oldest text are as follows:

Tabhraidh mo bhrat domh
is me nighean an Deirg ghráin,
nocha dearnus do locht
ach feis re Fionn faobhar-nocht.

Give me my mantle
I am the daughter of Derg (Red) the fierce,
who never committed any fault
except sleeping with Finn of the naked sword.⁵

Bla, the daughter of Derg, or, as she is also called, Blái Derg, is well known elsewhere in Ossianic tradition as the mother of Ossín (Ossian). In the *Acallamh na Senórach*,⁶ a frame story dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and embodying much

¹ See especially Gaston Paris' criticism (*Romania*, XXVIII, 219, n. 3) of Stern's opinion (*Ztsch. für celt. Phil.*, I, 306 ff.).

² *Duanaire Finn*, Introduction.

³ This assertion stands, even in the face of Zimmer's list of Irish translations of Continental romances (*Göt. gel. Anz.* [1890], p. 503). Cf. *Mod. Phil.*, X, 299, n. 1; Henderson, *Misc. Presented to Kuno Meyer*, Halle, 1912, 18 ff.

⁴ In only one Continental version, the *Skikkju Rítmur*, does the severity of the punishment inflicted upon the guilty wives at all approximate that in the Celtic ballad. In the Norse account the offenders are banished from court. Cf. *Versions nordiques*, p. 99.

⁵ Essentially the same statement is found in the Irish text of the Edinburgh manuscript (*Relig. Celt.*, I, 117 f.). In the corresponding stanza of the Harvard manuscript printed by Robinson (*Mod. Phil.*, I, 157), the woman announces that she has never had to do with any man except her own husband, but it appears from the second line that the whole stanza is ultimately derived from one resembling that quoted from the Edinburgh text. The references to Derg and Finn are missing in the *Duanaire Finn*.

⁶ Ed., Whitley Stokes, *Irische Texte*, IV, 1 (1900), p. 2. Cf. Stern, *op. cit.*, III, 614.

ancient Irish lore, Ossín, on departing from Cailte, his ancient companion in arms, goes to *Síd Ocha Cleitigh*, *bhail a raibhe a mháthair*, *Bla inghen Déirc Dhianscothaig*, "the fairy-mound of O.C., where was his mother, Bla, the daughter of Derg of the Vehement Words." According to the Franciscan manuscript of the *Acallamh*, Ossín's destination was *Siódh Ochtair*, a reading which is supported by an Ossianic ballad, where the hero is said to have been the son of Derg's daughter and to have been born at *Chuan Iochtair*.¹ In another Irish ballad Ossín is called the son of Derg's daughter as though his ancestry were a matter of common knowledge.²

Epic tradition has ever delighted to attribute to its heroes amours with supernatural beings, and Ossianic story is particularly fond of representing Finn and his most famous companions as attracting the love of women from the other world.³ Among Finn's fairy paramours Blái occupies a prominent position, both because of her illustrious son and because of the circumstances attending her relations with the father. The earliest reference to the occurrence is contained in an eleventh-century poem found in the *Book of Leinster*⁴ (compiled ca. 1150). The poet, after alluding to the mother of Diarmuid, adds:

Blái Derg din Banbai braiss,
máthair Ossíne amnaiss.

Ticed [Blái] i rricht eilte
hi comdail na díbergge,
co ndernad Ossíne de,
ri Blái nDeirg i rricht eilte.

Moreover, Blái Derg⁵ of swift Banba
was the mother of Ossín the fierce.

Blái used to come in the form of a deer
into the assembly of the robbers,
so that consequently Ossín was begotten
upon Blái [daughter] of Derg in deer form.

¹ *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, I (1854), 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33. Cf. *Irische Texte*, IV, 1 (1900), p. 71; *Sil. Gad.*, I, 149; *The Dean of Lismore's Book* (ed., McLauchlan, Edinburgh, 1862), Text, p. 50.

³ See, for example, *Todd Lect. Ser.*, XVI (1910), 48; *Rev. celt.*, XV (1894), 334; XVI, 147; *Irish Texts Society*, VII (1904), 145 f.

⁴ *Facsimile*, 164, Col. 1, upper margin. Cf. *Todd Lect. Ser.*, XVI (1910), xxvi; Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I (1895), 151 f. Hogan mistakes Blái nDeirg for a place-name (*Onomasticon Gadelicum*, s.v.).

The name Ossín is a genuine Irish diminutive of the word *oss*, "deer,"¹ and the story of the great warrior-poet's birth, first told to support the etymology, belongs to that extremely ancient class of primitive folk-myths which deals with animal marriage.² Moreover, the most recent investigations have demonstrated that the formation of the epic cycle clustering about Finn and his half-outlaw band of professional warriors began at least as early as the eighth century after Christ.³ It may therefore well be that the story of Ossín's birth, so briefly summarized by an eleventh-century Irish genealogist of antiquarian tastes, formed part of the earliest Ossianic epic.⁴ Finally the genuinely popular character of the tradition is shown by the tenacity with which it holds its place in modern folklore. That Ossín was the offspring of Finn and a deer was known to the Irish peasantry of the nineteenth century;⁵ eight modern Highland Scottish accounts are referred to by J. F. Campbell;⁶ and in a woman's "waulking" song from the Western Isles, of which fourteen versions were known to Campbell, Ossín addresses his mother, who is in the form of a deer, and warns her against the hounds. Both the Irish and the Scottish versions show the effects of rationalization and sentimentalism in representing the mother as a persecuted maiden temporarily under a druidic spell⁷ instead of as a supernatural being who assumes the form of a doe in order to approach her lover, but her original character is obvious.

¹ Cf. Meyer, *Todd Lect. Ser.*, XVI, xviii, n. 3. As Meyer points out, Zimmer is wrong in claiming that the word is an Irish loan from the Norse *Ásvin*.

² Cf. *Trans. Oss. Soc.*, II (1855), 161 ff. Celtic tradition constantly represents the fairy folk as associated with deer or as using these animals for disguise. See J. F. Campbell, *Pop. Tales*, II (1890), 120; J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands* (Glasgow, 1900), pp. 22, 27, 28; Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Oxon., I (1909), cxliii f.; Drummond, *Ancient Irish Minstrelsy* (Dublin, 1852), p. 52; *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, II (1855), 169; IV (1859), 235 ff.

³ See the studies of Mac Neill and Meyer, referred to above, pp. 654, n. 2; 656, n. 1.

⁴ Cf. Nutt, *op. cit.*, II, 88.

⁵ Cf. Patrick Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (London, 1866), pp. 235 ff.

⁶ *Leabhar na Feinne*, p. 198.

⁷ In the Irish account the woman is called Saav (*recte* Sadb), apparently by confusion with one of Finn's mortal wives, although it is worth noting that in the *Acallamh na Senórach*, Finn's wife Sadb is said to have been the daughter of the fairy chieftain Bodb Derg (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 172 ff.). In certain Scottish versions Ossín's mother is said to have been the famous Gráinne, whose attitude toward Finn, as established by the best tradition, precludes the legitimacy of her appearing in the rôle of Ossín's mother (cf. J. F. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 199; *Celt. Rev.*, I, 205). The Scottish versions, which represent the child as begotten upon the woman while she is wandering about as a doe, are more primitive than the Irish, where the machinery of the story provides for her restoration to human form long enough for the child to be conceived.

From the evidence presented above it is clear that for centuries the canny ones among the folk, who comprehend the ways of their own literature much better than many cultured purveyors of popular themes, have understood that the reciter of the Gaelic "Ballad of the Mantle" was raking up a scandal about Finn and a fairy woman.¹

That Blái's specific motive was recognized by those who heard the ballad in its original form may also be demonstrated from an examination of Celtic tradition. The inspiration of her malice is to be sought, not in such suspicious motives as are suggested in early Continental versions of the mantle story, but in an ancient and widespread folklore formula which may be stated as follows: An other-world woman bestows her affection upon a mortal but, on finding her offer rejected or on being abandoned for a rival, hates as violently as once she loved.

Among the various types of heroine depicted in mediaeval literature the fairy mistress of early Irish epic and romance is noteworthy for her capricious and jealous nature. When crossed in love, she is as vengeful as any fair-haired virago among the barbaric folk to whose untutored imagination she owes her existence, and she has retained her reputation down to recent times.² Otherworld women who take vengeance for rejected love are found not only in the sagas of the Ulster cycle, the most extensively preserved body of ancient Irish tradition, but also in various detached romances,³ and the large number of examples to be found in Ossianic literature shows how extremely popular was the theme during the Middle and Modern Irish periods. Of the numerous stories of supernatural beings who proffer their love to the heroes of the *Fian*, several picture Finn as suffering from the jealousy of his would-be mistress, or as escaping her wiles only by the exercise of his unusual powers of divination. A well-known Ossianic story tells of two fairy women, sisters, who simultaneously offer their love to Finn. One, perceiving that the other is about to outbid her for the hero's affections, transforms herself into a deer, lures Finn to a magic lake, and changes him into a

¹ Child was on the right track when he spoke of Derg's daughter in the ballad as "certainly a wife of Finn." (*Ballads*, I, 262).

² See *Trans. Oss. Soc.*, II, 102.

³ Miss Paton's discussion (*Fairy Mythology*, pp. 4 ff., 21 f., 48) is based chiefly on material drawn from the Ulster cycle. See further Thurneysen, *Sagen aus dem alten Irland*, pp. 81 ff.; *Rev. cell.*, XXIII (1902), 396 ff.; *Mod. Phil.*, XII (1915), 641, n. 2.

decrepit, white-haired man.¹ In the *Acallamh na Senórach* an other-world woman offers her love to Finn, but on such extraordinary conditions that her proposal is declined, whereupon she gives Finn a potion which causes a frenzy.² The list might be considerably extended,³ but the episodes here noted sufficiently illustrate the theme of fairy jealousy in early Irish literature. Although it is not clear why Maighinis, among the various wives assigned by tradition to the uxorious Finn, was chosen by popular fancy as the subject of the mantle test, the considerations just set forth leave no room for doubt that the motive which underlies Blái's action (and which occurred at once to the hearers of the ballad as the explanation of her presence in the story, is that indicated in the formula outlined above; namely, vengeance for discarded love and jealousy of a favored rival. This conclusion, if correct, goes far toward establishing the independent character of the Gaelic ballad, for, of all the mediaeval versions of the mantle test, the Celtic furnishes the most primitive and, to the student of popular origins, the most satisfactory inciting motive for the story. Moreover, the remarkable precision with which, even in matters of detail, the character and actions, not only of Blái but of the remaining personages, are adapted to the established conventions of the Ossianic epic, the brutality of the men, and the indelicacy of the women, with never an indication of past courtly history, all tend to discredit the otherwise conceivable assumption⁴ that the Gaelic ballad is a mere rifacimento of any preserved non-Celtic version. It may be added that, however late the connection of Morgain with the mantle test may have been, the establishment of the independent character of the Gaelic version lends additional color to Miss Paton's theory that the relations between Morgain and Arthur find their most satisfactory explanation in ancient Celtic accounts of the fairy amours of epic heroes.⁵

TOM PEETE CROSS

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

¹ A summary of the story is given in the *Feis Tighe Chonain Chinn-Shléibhe*, a late compilation of traditional materials (*Trans. Oss. Soc.*, II, 168 ff.), and is connected with the account given in the *Seilg Shléibhe g-Cuilinn*, an Ossianic ballad which has met with wide popularity (*Trans. Oss. Soc.*, IV [1861], 2 ff.).

² *Irische Texte*, IV, 1, p. 135.

³ For other examples from Ossianic tradition, see *Trans. Oss. Soc.*, II, 161 ff.; *Rev. celt.*, XV (1894), 334.

⁴ Cf. Stern, *op. cit.*, I, 306 ff.

⁵ Cf. *Mod. Phil.*, XII, 605, n. 4.